

Newsline

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TEA-21 Benefits Montana

The Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century or TEA-21 was signed into law on June 9, 1998, authorizing funding for the Federal-Aid Highway Program through fiscal year 2003. The greatest benefit to Montana from TEA-21 is a significant increase for Montana's highway construction program. Funding amounts are expected to increase an average of about 60 percent over program levels of 1991-1997.

The amount in 2000 will be greater than \$265 million compared to a 1998 base of \$176 million, for an increase of about \$89 million. These higher federal-aid program levels translate directly into highway system improvements and jobs for design consultants and contractors. The \$89.2 million Federal increase in 2000 plus the average state match of 14 percent equals \$103.72 million for this year.

For example, this additional funding can improve a Montana two lane road with: 147 miles of reconstruction, or 687 miles of repaving, or 1,288 miles of thin lift overlay pavement preservation.

Because of the increase in highway program activities, MDT is asking the 56th Legislature to support an additional 111 full time employees. However, these employees will not undertake design or construction activities where they can be done competitively by private consultant design and contracting firms.



Secondary Roads Program Changes Proposed

Under current law, each of Montana's 56 counties receives an annual sub-allocation of Federal-Aid Highway Program funding for construction projects on Secondary Highways. Even though counties are allowed to borrow against future allocations, it is very difficult for them to accumulate enough funds for a major Secondary System reconstruction project.

Yet, the majority of the projects in the Secondary construction program are for major roadway or bridge reconstructions. Also, though the Transportation Commission has agreed to pass on TEA-21 program increases (over 60 percent) to the Secondary program, advancing major reconstruction projects with county by county funding restrictions will continue to create problems with delays in program delivery.

To fix this problem, MDT in close cooperation with the Montana Association of Counties and the County Commissioners of Montana is proposing program changes which would:

- Set-aside 65 percent of the program funds for system improvement with the remainder dedicated to system preservation.
- Distribute system improvement funding among the individual financial districts.
- Update and refine the distribution formula. NOTE: all districts will receive higher funding for system improvements than distributed in 1997 for the existing program.
- Set up a process to establish district-wide construction priorities. This process, which will involve county officials, will be negotiated within each district with technical support and statistics supplied by the MDT.
- In addition, and subject to approval of resources by the Legislature, the MDT will negotiate cooperative agreements to assume maintenance on all paved secondary roads.

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MDT Advocates Changes to Financial District Law



Currently, Montana's Financial District Law distributes federal-aid highway funds among Montana's five financial districts to improve and preserve the 2800-mile Primary System. This distribution is based on the number of miles each district has depending on pavement condition, road base, safety, and how well the roads handle traffic, it reflects their needs and ensures they are financially supported statewide.

Within existing law a district may exceed the amount given out by the distribution formula by 25 percent. This change would support actually moving projects into the construction phase as the design and environmental steps are completed. The amount of any transfer is then returned to the donor district from future distributions of the recipient district.

MDT is requesting the elimination of the 25 percent cap on transfers. This change would accommodate those instances when the construction program is disrupted by the 25 percent transfer limit. If approved, the requirement to repay the district(s) loaning distribution would stay in place. This flexibility is important as it is not always possible to anticipate where delays in project development may occur.

This amendment to the Financial District Law will ensure that Primary System projects move into construction as soon as they are ready. Yet the payback provision will ensure continued system-wide support for Primary Highways.

MDT Suggests New Urban Default Speed Limit

Current law defaults to a 25 mph speed limit in urban districts where another speed is not posted. There are very few places where an engineering study would support a 25 mph speed limit.

This is especially true where major state highways pass through communities and on commercial corridors.

Typically, an engineering study in such areas will support a speed limit of 45 mph or even 50 mph. While this is sound in terms of engineering practice, it is often unacceptable to local governments.

MDT is suggesting a more realistic approach which would increase the default urban speed limit to 35 mph. This would provide an alternative to speed zone studies that often result in higher speed limits being set.

If enacted, urban districts would have until December 31, 1999, to either keep the current speed limit of 25 mph or default to 35 mph. There would be no change to existing law which provides for lower speed zones near schools and senior citizens' centers.

Aviation Fuel Tax Increase

The current aviation fuel tax rate is 3 cents per gallon for general aviation and 1 cent per gallon for jet fuel used by the military and scheduled passenger-carrying airlines. One cent of the aviation fuel tax revenues has been the only funding source for the services provided by the Aeronautics Division of MDT since it was created in 1945. In October 1997, the 91st Air Force Air Refueling Wing was transferred from Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls. This transfer resulted in a revenue loss of approximately 25 percent (\$125,000) of the Aeronautics Division's annual funding. Because of this loss, some program areas have been reduced or eliminated and the Division is currently operating on revenue reserves.

To maintain existing programs and restore those which were eliminated or reduced, a 1 cent fuel tax increase is needed. A 1 cent aviation fuel tax increase applied to both general aviation and jet fuel would generate approximately \$336,000 annually.

Specific programs which would be restored or improved with these revenues include:

- Air search and rescue.
- Flight safety training.
- Pilot safety/education clinics.
- Maintenance of the 14 state-owned airports.
- Reinstatement of aviation education programs.

continued on page 3.

In addition, \$75,000 annually would be available in the form of grants to preserve runway pavements at Montana air carrier airports.

The requested 1 cent aviation fuel tax increase is supported by all member groups of the Aviation Organizations of Montana (AOM) and would result in aviation fuel tax rates which are less than the surrounding states. If approved by the 56th Legislature, this increase would be subject to presentation to the electorate in agreement with CI-75.



Highway State Special Revenue Account and Program Delivery

The Department of Transportation's highway construction program awards construction projects throughout the year.

Once awarded, federal funds are reserved for payments to contractors. Initially, these payments come from the Highway State Special Revenue (HSSR) account and roughly 86 percent is reimbursed with federal-aid Highway Program dollars. For this reason, the HSSR is critical in financing Montana's Highway construction program.

The following table is a snapshot taken at the end of each fiscal year back to 1992.

End of State Fiscal Year Snapshot

as of June 30	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998*</u>
Millions of dollars under contract.	219.1	264.1	270.7	254.5	281.9	290.7	327.2
Millions of dollars in highway work under contract, but not completed.	103.8	111.9	101.1	104.7	116.5	142.2	117.2

* first year of TEA-21

Note that the snapshot taken at the end of state fiscal year 1998 shows the higher program levels that will take place through 2003 under TEA-21.

In addition to the amount shown in the snapshot for June 30, 1998, \$142.426 has been let to contract by MDT for highway construction projects through December 1998. As a result, Montana can look forward to not only a greatly improved transportation system, but also to direct and indirect economic benefits.

STATEWIDE ROAD CONDITIONS

**1-800-226-ROAD
or (406) 444-6339
1-800-335-7592(TTY)**

INTERNET: www.mdt.mt.gov

Conditions on the Interstates and major passes are reported at 7:00 am (toll-free in the US).

**Highway Patrol Emergency
1-800-525-555**

*** Studded Tires are legal in Montana October 1 - May 31.**

NOTICE: THE CTEP OFFICE WILL BE MOVING TO THE BASEMENT WHERE THE PHOTO LAB WAS



Motor Vehicle Injury Issues

In Montana motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of all deaths for persons age 1 to 44 years, as well as the most common cause for hospitalizations for persons under age 40.

Auto injuries account for 35 percent of emergency room visits and cost billions of dollars in health care and social support in resources. Large portions of health care resources go to hospital stays, higher care costs, and long term disability. Other costs include lost wages, decreased productivity, and pain and suffering. The people paying these costs are the victim, taxpayer, and employer.

Crashes involving alcohol tend to result in more severe injuries than crashes that don't. Alcohol related fatalities increased by 40 percent in 1997 from 1996. Drivers under the influence of alcohol and the lack of a numerical daytime speed limit may have contributed to this significant increase in fatalities.

Drivers 15 to 20 years of age have begun to respond more readily to the drinking and driving problem. When young drivers are involved in crashes, 6.2 percent of these crashes include drinking and driving. This rate is 8.9 percent of all crashes regardless of age. The reasons for fewer teenage DUI's are anti-alcohol driving education provided to the schools and improved DUI laws that focus on under age drivers.

Since the repeal of Montana's daytime speed limit, speed has increased within the state, and out of state drivers are going faster than Montana drivers. For example, a speed study was conducted from August 1996 to September 1996 at 21 randomly selected locations in Montana. Speeds exceeding 80 mph occurred in over 19 percent of Montana vehicles, while over 25 percent of out of state vehicles exceeded 80 mph.

Seatbelt Usage

Montana's seatbelt usage increased from over 16 percent in 1984 to over 33 percent in 1987 before Montana's seatbelt law was enacted in October 1987. The law was written for secondary enforcement and covered all seating positions within vehicles. When the law was first enforced usage jumped to 56 percent and has continued to increase to the current level of 72 percent.

A special data collection program conducted within Yellowstone County shows how persons involved in crashes are 5.5 times more likely to require inpatient hospitalization than those who were belted (see charts on page 5). In addition, their average charge was \$4884.00 more than those for a belted inpatient. Also, 22 percent of injuries in car crashes came from other passengers not properly restrained.

In 1997, over 9000 motor vehicle occupants under 15 years old were involved in fatal crashes nationwide.

In Montana, since 1991 the injury rate for children ages four and under has increased. The increase in injuries is probably the result of many factors including the improper use of child safety seats. For children where restraint use was known, 46 percent were not properly restrained. Among those who were fatally injured, 63 percent were unrestrained. Research on the effectiveness of child safety seats found they reduce the risk of fatal injury by 69 percent for infants less than 1 year old and by 47 percent for toddlers 1 to 4 years old. Also, infants placed in the back seat of a vehicle in a rear-facing position away from a passenger side air bag have a much better survival rate during a crash.

In conclusion, preventing or minimizing traffic injury within Montana requires a sustained effort and a combination of several strategies. It involves effective enforcement and legislation, education, and intervention leading to behavioral and cultural change. For example, motor vehicles have been re-engineered to incorporate air bags. All 50 states have seat belt laws, and education programs have raised public awareness regarding the importance of wearing seat belts and using child safety seats. In addition, the Montana Traffic Safety Bureau has introduced the concept of social norm marketing to the State to increase awareness and help change at risk behavior.

By: Ms. Priscilla W. Sinclair, MT
Traffic Safety Bureau, at 444-7417

More Seatbelt Facts

1992-1995 YELLOWSTONE COUNTY CODES

Failure to "buckle up" contributes to more fatalities than any other traffic safety related behavior.

* **Unbelted** persons involved in crashes were 5.5 times more likely to require inpatient hospitalization than those who were **belted**.

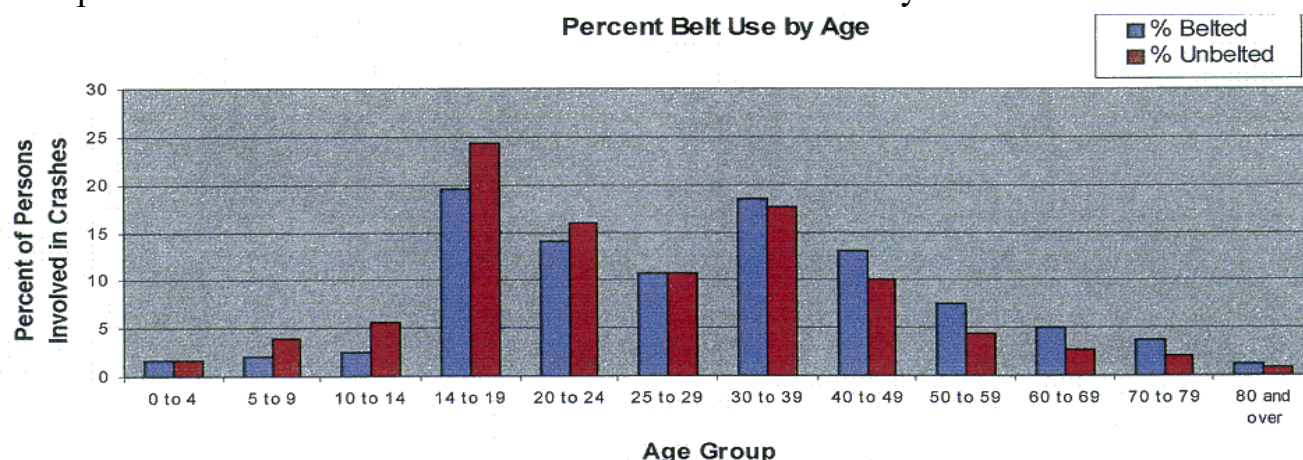
* Of children that were hospitalized due to automobile crashes, 75% were unbelted.

* The average hospital charge for a **belted** inpatient was **\$15,515**. The average hospital charge for an **unbelted** inpatient was **\$20,399**.

* If unbelted persons involved in crashes would have been belted, Yellowstone County could have saved 13 lives and 142 hospital stays.

* From 1992-95, \$7,130,983 was spent on inpatient hospital charges for unbelted persons involved in crashes. Of those charges, \$5,225,814 could have been saved if unbelted persons would have been belted.

* 76 percent of fatalities from 1992-95 in Yellowstone County were unbelted.



Other sources of data, such as the Montana System Trauma Register, are beginning to produce valuable data in a number of areas, including injury severity and outcome comparisons against expected results. The system trauma register data indicate the primary causes of injury from 1991 through 1996 as seen in Figure 4 . The age distribution of major trauma patients from multiple years is graphically represented in Figure 5 .

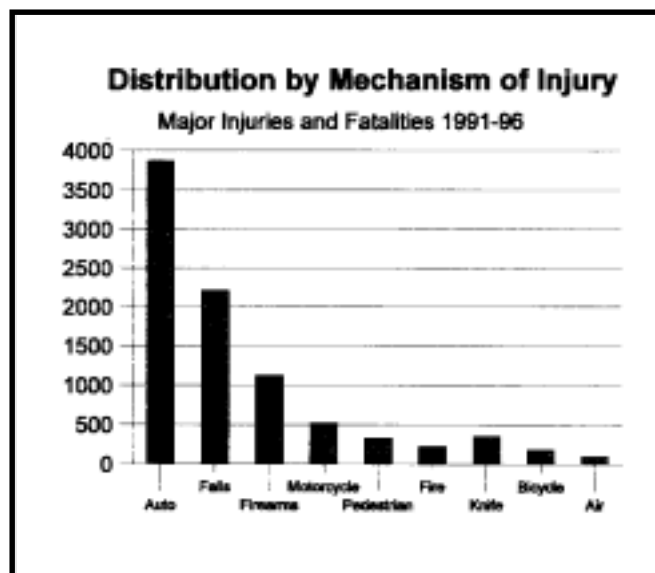


FIGURE 4

DPHHS System Trauma Register

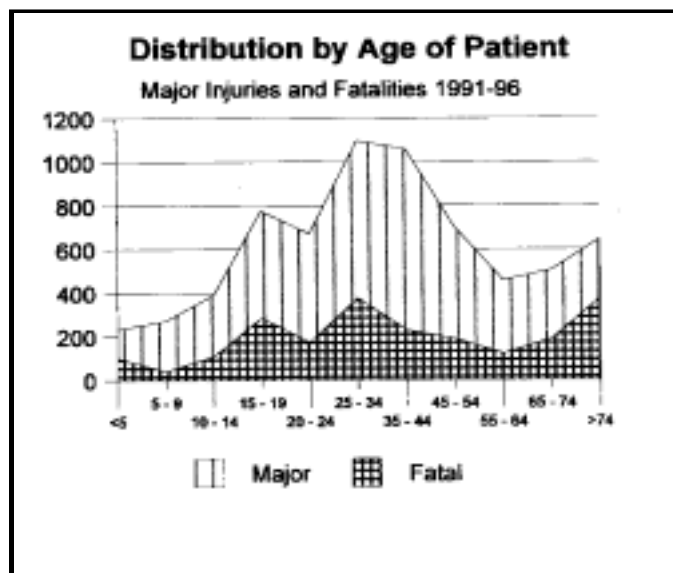


FIGURE 5

CTEP PROGRAM APPROVED

The Transportation Commission, at its regularly scheduled December meeting, approved the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) as submitted by the Transportation Planning Division.

Prior to Commission approval the Transportation Planning Division conducted a two-cycle process with the Montana Association of County officials, the League of Cities and Towns, and local government officials across Montana.

Highlights of CTEP, funded under TEA-21, and as approved by the Transportation Commission:

- Eligible Local Governments: All 56 Montana counties; cities of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class; and, the seven Tribal Government Reservations within the state of Montana will be eligible to participate. MDT is encouraging eligible local governments through Interagency agreements, to combine their individual programs in order to maximize the efficient use of local resources. To participate, eligible local governments must write MDT and appoint a Local Agency Program Administrator (LPA).
- Enhancement Fund Distribution: Enhancement funds will be distributed using a simple population based formula.

- Eligible Project Categories: MDT will allow local government to pursue enhancement projects in each category, and decide locally which project categories to pursue as program policy and procedures are developed.
- Minimum Project Size: \$10,000 minimum
- Project Match: Federal enhancement funds will pay 86.58 percent of eligible project costs and local government will provide the 13.42 percent match on all projects.
- Local Government Program Administration: Local government must implement an annual public involvement process to solicit project nominations. After project nominations are received, evaluated, and ranked, the final selections will be sent to MDT.

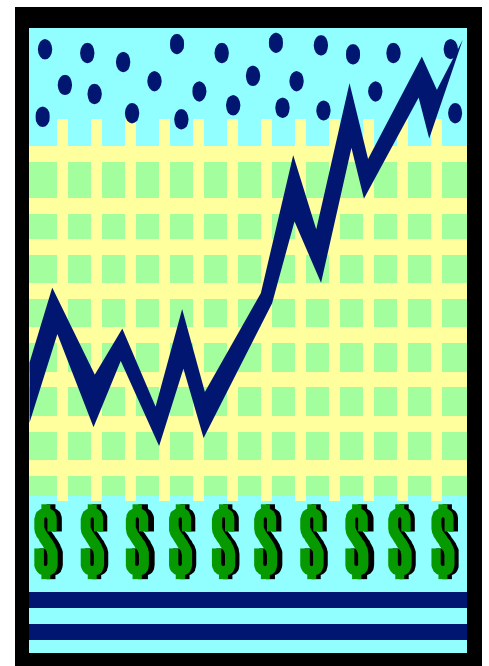
Special financial arrangements can be made if a local government needs to “bank” funds to adequately finance a project where costs would exceed a local government’s annual allocation amount.

- Annual Project Approval: MDT will accept local government project proposals once per year from each participant.
- Approved Project Development: Local government will procure consultant services and administer the consultant contracts in accordance with MDT approved procedures.

Local government will ensure that construction contracts are let and administered in accordance with MDT approved procedures. MDT will determine, upon receipt of a local government request, which CTEP projects can be developed by the state.

- Project Budgets: Local government is encouraged to reserve 5 percent of each annual allocation to cover unanticipated project costs such as scope creep, change orders and additional work, etc. Local government will cover all cost increases not approved in accordance with CTEP program modification requirements.

A copy of the approved CTEP program outline can be obtained by contacting the MDT Transportation Planning Division at 444-3423.



Transit Vehicles To 26 Agencies

MDT's Transit Section has announced that 26 agencies throughout Montana have received funds from the FY 1999 Montana capital assistance grant program. Funds for this program come from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Section 5310 and 5311 grants, the Surface Transportation Program, and the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

The Transit Section will place a total of 29 vehicles at these agencies. Of the 29 vehicles, 17 are wheelchair lift-equipped transit buses, 3 are transit buses without wheelchair lifts, 2 are wheelchair lift-equipped vans, 4 are transit vans without wheelchair lifts and 3 are mini-vans. Funding for this equipment is 80% federal dollars matched with 20% local dollars.

Golden Triangle of Helena is the only new start agency among this year's recipients. All other agencies receiving vehicles have had vehicles in their fleet previously funded through the Transit Section's capital assistance program.

Capital assistance applications for FY 2000 are due to the MDT Transit Section by February 1, 1999. For more information, please contact Janis Winston at 444-4210.



Transit Section Receives First State Management Review

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recently conducted a state management review of Montana's transit programs. The purpose of the review was to assess the state's management of the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program (Section 5310), the Non-urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5311) and compliance with specific Federal requirements. The review also provided technical assistance to the state regarding specific federal requirements applicable to the programs and to document the state's management and administration of the programs.

This was the first review of its kind for Montana's transit programs and was conducted by the consulting firm of Gardiner, Kanya and Associates, P.C. based in Washington DC, and assisted by FTA regional staff from Denver, Colorado. The review examined 18 areas of Federal requirements. Two subrecipient visits (Helena Dail-A-Ride and Quality Life Concepts in Great Falls) were also conducted by the review team to assess the relationship of the state with its subrecipients.

In the future, state programs will be reviewed every three years.

Van Pool Operations Transferred To Mountain Line

The Missoula-Ravalli Transportation Management Association (MR TMA) recently transferred a major portion of its van pool program to Mountain Line, a general public transit system in Missoula. Mountain Line will take over the operations and reporting portions of the program while MR TMA will remain involved in the coordination of the routes, drivers and passengers. MDT will continue to provide most of the funding for the program.

"MR TMA is looking forward to expanding the program," said Joyce Ciemny, the assistant director of MR TMA. "We've already seen an increase in the number of calls about the van pool."

Mike Kress of Mountain Line said, "Mountain Line will assume responsibility of the MR TMA van pool the first part of 1999. We'll be adding two vehicles to the fleet during the next calendar year." The van pool vehicles are leased from VPSI, Inc. in Troy, Michigan. The lease agreement with VPSI, Inc. includes vehicle maintenance.



Transportation Planning Division Telephone Numbers

MDT Upcoming Events....

Child Safety Seat Training

January 28 & 29, 1998
Helena, MT

February 11 & 12, 1999
Great Falls, MT

February 25 & 26, 1999
Yogo Inn - Lewistown, MT

March 11 & 12, 1999
Best Western GranTree Inn
Bozeman, MT

Contact Ms. Priscilla W. Sinclair
at 406-444-7417 for more
information.

For more information on any of these events
call **1-800-714-7296**

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call **1-800-714-7296** (in Montana only), or **(406) 444-3423**. TDD (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592

Administrator (Patricia Saindon)	444-3143
Bike/Pedestrian (Jennifer Dalrymple)	444-9273
CTEP (Mike Davis)	444-4383
Mapping (Jim Erickson)	444-6119
Multimodal Planning (Dick Turner)	444-7289
Projects (Jeff Ebert)	444-7639
Public Involvement (Dave Dreher)	444-6245
Safety Programs (Drug/Alcohol, Occupant Protection) (Priscilla Sinclair)	444-7417
Secondary Roads (Gary Larson)	444-6110
Road Inventory & Mapping (Zia Kazimi)	444-6111
Traffic Safety (Albert Goke)	444-7301
Traffic Data (Dan Bisom)	444-6122
Transit (Janis Winston)	444-4210
Urban Planning (Lynn Zanto)	444-3445
ITS Planning (Ross Tervo)	444-9248
Newsline Editor (Mark Enger)	444-7307

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